

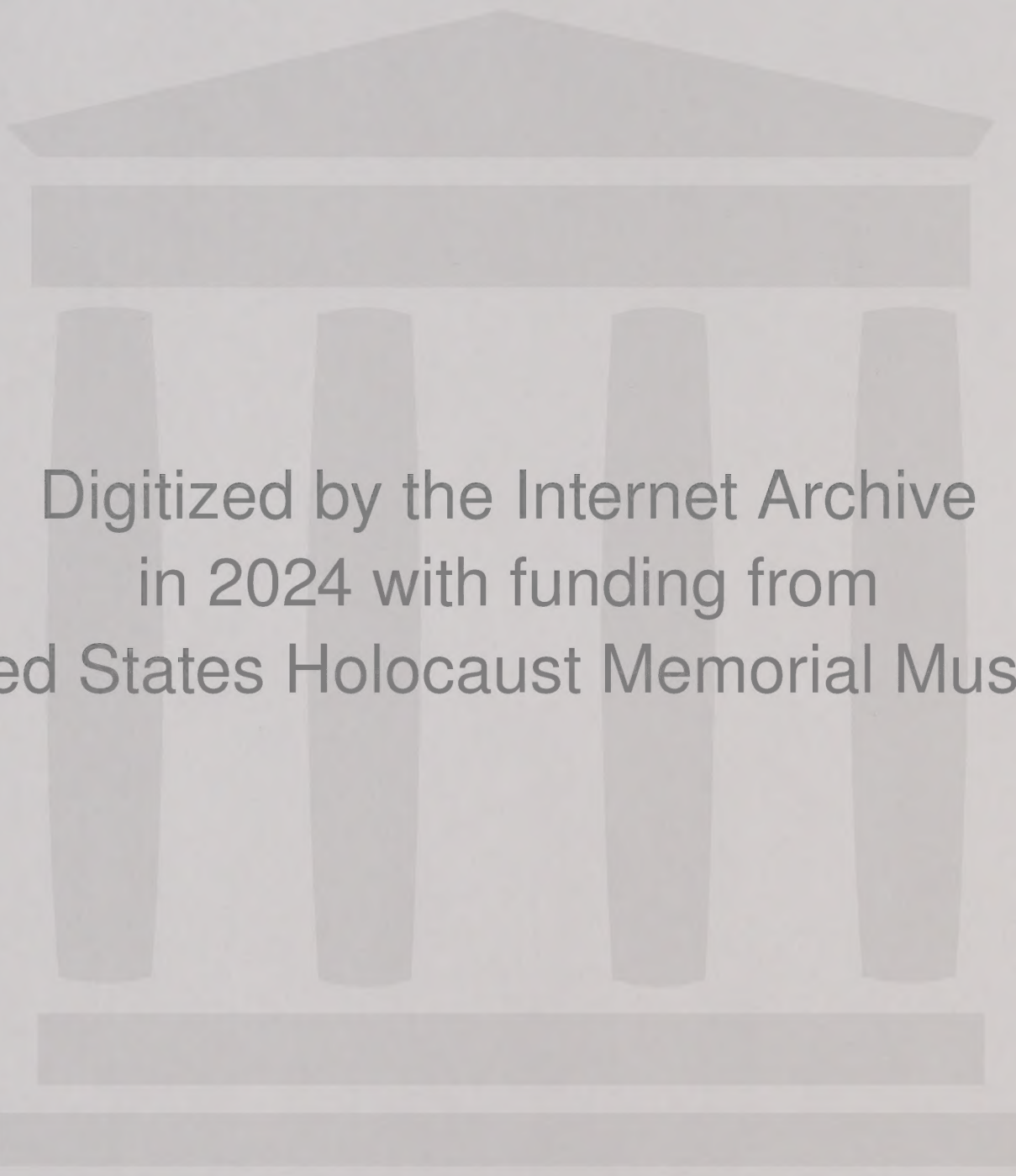


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Surrendering the Self: The Reduction of Identity to Identification with the Aggressor

The Cases of Hermann Göring
and Rudolf Hess

Henry Dicks's study of approximately 1000 German prisoners of war in World War II gives striking support to my own thinking on the subject of nonidentity (Gruen, 1999). His results were published in 1950, the same year as *The Authoritarian Personality* by Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford but independently of that work. Dicks's investigation made clear that identifying with punitive authority figures leads to a situation in which one's own self is "surrendered," making it impossible to develop an inner strength because the need for emotional warmth and love had to be rejected. He demonstrated that such people feel empty, but fill their emptiness by performing their duty and obediently complying with what is expected of them. Simultaneously, they project their repressed aggression toward themselves onto others who are weaker. I should like to examine Dicks's results in detail as displayed in Tables I and II.

By means of in-depth interviews, Dicks gathered data on personality variables and political attitudes. His statistical tests demonstrate that identifying with authoritarian parental figures leads to an inability to work out an identity of one's own.

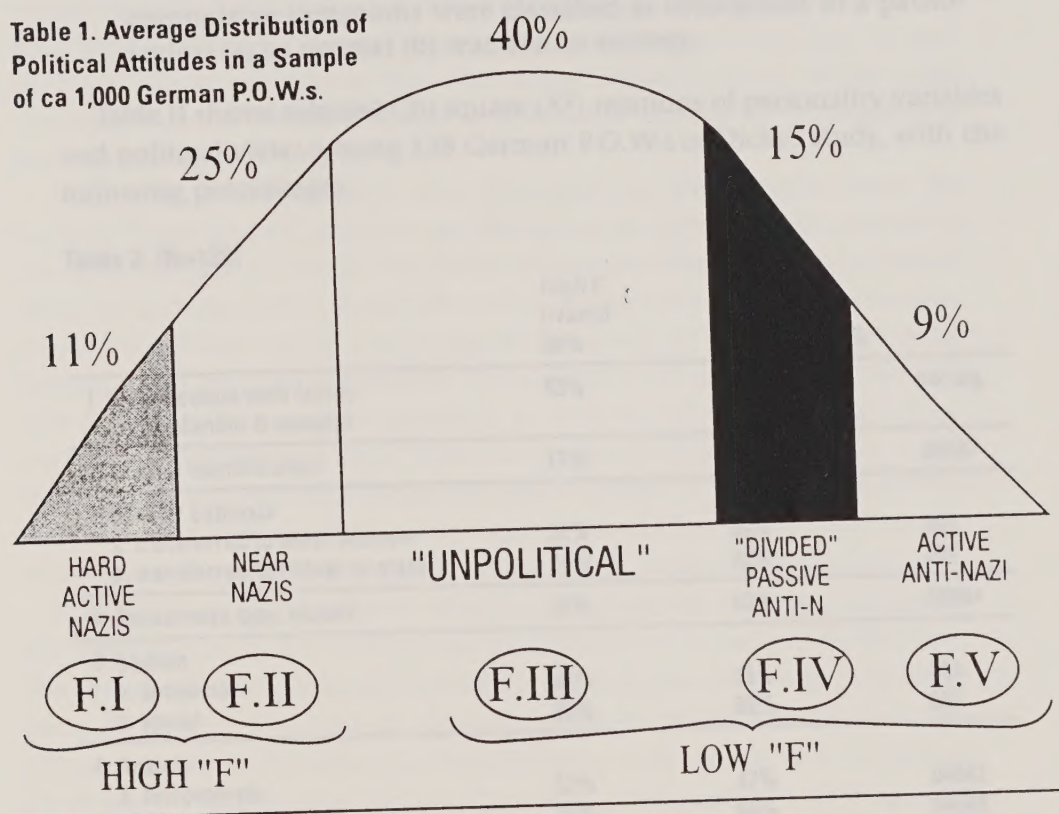
In terms of political attitude, the prisoners of war interviewed could be divided into the following categories: 11 per cent were convinced hardcore Nazis; 25 per cent were (ethically speaking) loyal Nazis who nevertheless had reservations about the efficiency of that political system; 40 per cent could be classified as unpolitical although they passively accepted the social and political actions of the regime; 15 per cent were am-

bivalent toward the Nazis, feeling conflicted because they considered themselves patriotic but didn't know where they stood; 9 per cent were active anti-Nazis who were opposed to the regime in their thinking and sometimes in their actions. Dicks's interview technique permitted their answers to be classified along political and personal lines, resulting in a scale, arbitrarily designated as "F," of five categories ranging from F.I (high) to F.V (low). For statistical purposes, the first two groups were combined and classified as Nazis with a high F value (36 per cent of those questioned). The last two groups—15 per cent passive and 9 per cent active anti-Nazis—showed a low F value (24 per cent of those questioned).

Of the personality variables established by Dicks, I shall refer only to those that are relevant to my topic of nonidentity:

- 1) Identification with the father, not only as a result of infantile weakness, dependency, and anxiety but also as a conscious decision on the part of the adult (that is, infantile relationships were replaced by adult ones). In the statistical analysis this category is designated as father-cathexis.

Table 1. Average Distribution of Political Attitudes in a Sample of ca 1,000 German P.O.W.s.



- 2) Identification with the mother as the primary parent (mother-cathexis).
- 3) Transference of the mother-cathexis in adulthood:
 - a) to other female partners;
 - b) to the Führer (leader) or the state. The unconscious expectation on the part of the prisoners is that their need for mothering can be satisfied by a Führer or a government institution—in other words, by an “idealized” abstract figure.
- 4) A tenderness tabu originating from a ban on displays of tenderness within the family. Male impotence, femininity, and submissiveness are signs of weakness; male potency and inflexibility represent strength.
- 5) Sadism:
 - a) Identification with a castrating authority. Prisoners in this category experienced overtly sadistic pleasure without any guilt feelings; they thought they should have treated their victims more harshly.
 - b) Aggression as a normal, conscious, self-protective reaction not connected with sadism.
- 6) Anxiety. Neurotic, psychosomatic ailments as well as phobic or compulsive symptoms were classified as indications of a pathological (a) or normal (b) reaction to anxiety.

Table II shows selected Chi square (X^2) relations of personality variables and political views among 138 German P.O.W.s of Dicks's study, with the following percentages:

Table 2. (N=138)

	High F (Nazis) 36%	Low F (anti-Nazis) F.IV & F.V=24%	
1. Identification with father: (both infantile & mature)	53%	47%	not sig.
2. Mother identification	17%	83%	.00137
3. Mother cathexis			
a. transferred to other women	34%	66%	.001
b. transferred to Führer or state	78%	22%	.001
4. Tenderness tabu absent	37%	63%	.00964
5. Sadism			
a. antisocial	62%	38%	.001
b. social	32%	68%	.001
6. Anxiety			
a. symptomatic	53%	47%	.04042
b. normal	35%	65%	.04042

The group identifying strongly with the father was divided fairly evenly between Nazis and anti-Nazis, which at first leads us to assume that identifying with the father does not influence one's political attitude. This finding is misleading, however, because in the statistical evaluation infantile identification and the more differentiated adult identification were inexplicably subsumed in one category as father identification. Dicks's accompanying discussion of the results (pp. 125, 138) makes clear what the statistical treatment ignores: the father identification of the Nazis was very different from that of the anti-Nazis. The latter reflected a mature type of identification in which (as already stated) infantile, anxiety-based identification was replaced by an adult equality.

In the case of the high "F" scoring Nazis, the father-identification was based on fear and submissiveness, with the consequence that members of this group idealized the father and felt inferior to him but at the same time were filled with fantasies of omnipotence. They had surrendered their own self (ego), and because their superego was externalized—that is, they complied with the rules and duties imposed on them by those in authority—they had no guilt feelings. According to Dicks, this ego deficiency resulted in feelings of weakness and emptiness in these men. They were full of aggression toward those they judged to be weak, such as children and all others whom they considered beneath them. At the same time they felt victimized by others and thus saw themselves as justified in seeking revenge on them.

Among those interviewed who demonstrated identification with the mother, 17 per cent belonged to the Nazi group as opposed to 83 per cent to the anti-Nazi group. The consequences of this identification become clearer when we consider the transference of the libido-cathexis from the mother. Among the Nazis, 34 per cent showed the ability to transfer their libido-cathexis to an adult female partner. The remaining 66 per cent with this ability belonged to the group of anti-Nazis. In contrast, 78 percent of those questioned who transferred their infantile libidinous mother cathexis to the Führer or an authoritarian institution were located in the Nazi group. This indicates that their negative assessment of the mother made them unable to separate from her and outgrow their infantile dependency on her.

Sixty-three per cent of those who had experienced a tenderness tabu in the family were in the Nazi group, as opposed to 37 percent in the anti-Nazi group. (Dicks's statistics express the contrast the other way around: 63 per cent of the anti-Nazis did not experience a tenderness tabu whereas 37 per cent did.) The absence of a tenderness tabu points to a childhood more shaped by love than by fear. This is the prerequisite for development of a genuine identity as well as a democratic attitude in politics.

Sadism showed a similar connection with political attitude: 62 per cent of the Nazis and 38 per cent of the anti-Nazis were classified as sadistic. On the other hand, 38% of those rated as pro-Nazi exhibited a socially normal degree of aggressiveness, while 68% of anti-Nazis showed a normal kind of aggressiveness.

Dicks's statistical data concerning anxiety reveal the psychic malaise subliminally present in people without an identity of their own, and indicate that they experience much greater inner turmoil than those whose genuine identity makes it possible for them to deal with anxiety in a responsible way. Those whose identity is based on identification with authority, however, seem able to manage their anxiety only by means of projection, developing psychosomatic, obsessive-compulsive, or phobic symptoms. In other words, they refuse to acknowledge the suffering caused by their self-hatred, projecting it outward instead. Here we see the creation of "the enemy" in persons cut off from the self (Gruen, 2000). Dicks's statistics reveal that 65 per cent of the anti-Nazis dealt normally with their anxiety in contrast to only 35 per cent of the Nazis.

Dicks's data clearly demonstrate the link between political attitude and those factors in a child's development that result in a lack of identity. The frequency distribution of political attitudes as shown in Table I closely approaches Gauss's normal distribution, indeed is nearly identical to it. In *Der Verlust des Mitgeföhls* (The loss of empathy, p. 175), I call attention to several empirical studies with similar results that lead us to conclude how widespread in our society is a lack of love on the part of parents for their children. This lack of love provides the basis for alienation from the self and is therefore responsible for the prevalence of people without an identity of their own.

In "Some Thoughts on the Meaning of the Word Democracy," an article published in *Human Nature* in 1950, Winnicott advanced the thesis that the citizens of a democratic society must have emotional maturity if it is to function well. He raises the question of how high a proportion of anti-social individuals a society can tolerate without losing its democratic character. Winnicott designates as anti-social those who identify with authority for reasons having to do with their inner insecurity. These people, he writes, are unhealthy and immature because their identification with the aggressor prevents self-discovery. "It is a sense of frame without sense of picture, a sense of form without retention of spontaneity. This is a pro-society tendency that is anti-individual. People who develop in this way can be called 'hidden anti-socials.'"

These "hidden anti-socials" lack wholeness in their humanity. In order to gain control of their inner conflicts, they must locate them outside themselves. What Winnicott means here is that such people always think in terms of being in control and believe they have everything under control. But because they deny their inner conflicts, they are unable to gain genuine mastery of their lives.

Winnicott's definition of a healthy person is someone who can experience sadness and acknowledge inner conflict, as well as recognize the actuality of his or her surround. For Winnicott, the fact that so many parents are not good parents is the basis for the development of an anti-democratic personality. Accompanying this development is also a fear of women, which has its origin in the extreme dependence of the small child in our culture on its mother. Winnicott sees this fear as the real reason for the need many people have to dominate others in order to escape the fear of being dominated by a woman. This unconscious fear explains the characteristic habit of many dictators of insisting not only on absolute obedience and dependence, but also on being loved by everyone.

We are dealing here with a child's reaction to the first, terrorizing "love" of a mother who was not able to meet her child's needs. It is crucial to understand that what is really involved is the *perversion* of love. Winnicott recognizes the pervasive plight of the child in our culture, for he estimates the proportion of those who receive the kind of love that allows them to develop emotional maturity to be no more than 30 per cent. Therefore, he believes that the question of the stability of a democratic society must be addressed in the context of the kind of childrearing prevalent in that society.

Winnicott calls our attention to another aspect of people's search for a strong leader who will dominate them with superhuman power: behind their search lies their fear of women, a fear that is denied by attributing to them magical, witchlike qualities, which in turn are warded off by regarding them as inferior objects of contempt. This leads to an expanded understanding of the phenomenon of identification with the aggressor. If the unloving mother is indeed the source of terror, which makes her into an all-powerful "queen of darkness," then having a strict and brutal father not only leads to identification with the aggressor: the terror *he* causes also diverts attention from the more profound terror aroused by the mother, who is the first and most important attachment figure. This also explains why so many people fell under Hitler's spell. He saved both men and women from their unconsciously feared all-powerful mother. For men, the idealization of a male dictator automatically excludes having to acknowledge a woman as

the source of their anxiety. For women, the Führer reduces the terror caused by the mother. In Maria Gambaroff's research on hostility to men in the feminist emancipation movement, she found that the hostility represents a displacement of fear from the threatening mother.

Approximately 16 per cent of the research subjects Erich Fromm describes in *Social Character in a Mexican Village* proved to be authoritarian, exploitative, and destructive. These were people who needed an enemy in order to preserve their personality structure. These people are akin to the Nazi-group in Dicks's study. Studies of post-traumatic illness in Vietnam veterans show similar results in the spectrum of the statistical distribution: those soldiers who did not develop symptoms had identity structures like the active anti-Nazis of Dicks's study. Their identity structures were also based on empathic capacity and not on identification with authoritarian male symbols (see also Gruen, 1997; Herman, 1982). These American soldiers did not need to prove their masculinity, and they felt responsible for what they did, sometimes refusing to obey orders; they accepted their own fears as well as those of others. As children they had experienced genuine love and empathy. Approximately 10 per cent of the Vietnam veterans belonged in this category, which corresponds to the group of active anti-Nazis. What is striking in all these studies is the large number of those who were emotionally "indifferent." In Dicks's study, over 70 per cent of his subjects were to be found in this category. Similarly two-thirds of Vietnam veterans who had either participated in atrocities or watched without resisting were the ones who later developed stress symptoms.

All of this suggests the conclusion that there are forces in our society that turn an individual's self into "a stranger," thereby blocking identity development. This ultimately leads to the need to punish in others one's own victimization. It seems to me that such people correspond to the 50 per cent of the population to which Winnicott, on the basis of his clinical experience as a pediatrician and later a psychoanalyst, attributes undemocratic leanings. These are the people who are not whole human beings, whose personality structure is directed outward and who must be in control of others instead of themselves (Winnicott, p. 183). And this intuitive 50 per cent corresponds to the more than 36 per cent who were Nazis in the group Dicks interviewed.

Such people are especially susceptible to paranoid fears—particularly in times of uncertainty when they feel threatened in their being by the changes taking place in society. Hidden behind their paranoid fears lurks the stranger within, whom they must cast off. Here lies the danger for democratic societies. It is important to recognize the role played by the lack

of identity in social disintegration and the rise of dictatorship. The antidote to disintegration is to foster caring and kindness in childrearing practices. It must be the concern of our society to create conditions for children in which they can experience love, empathy, and acceptance. Love provides the fertile soil for our development, both as individuals and as a society. If it is missing, stunted development results. As early as 1946, Erik Erikson warned that those who study history are prone to ignore the fact that each and every one of us was born of a woman and was once a child; that we all, as individuals and as members of a group, get our start in the nursery; and that a society consists of individuals who are in the process of developing from children into parents.

I should now like to substantiate by means of two biographies how strongly a child's upbringing affects identity development, and how the lack of identity gives rise to lethal destructiveness.

HERMANN GÖRING

(Biographical details are from F. R. Miale and M. Selzer, *The Nuremberg Mind*; G. M. Gilbert, *The Psychology of Dictatorship*; D. M. Kelley, *Twenty-Two Cells in Nürnberg: A Psychiatrist Examines the Nazi Criminals*; R. Manvell and H. Fraenkel, *Goering and The Incomparable Crime*; Fest, *The Face of the Third Reich*.)

Hermann Göring's father was a man of considerable importance. In 1885 he became Resident Minister for Southwest Africa, a German colony at the time. A few years later he went to Haiti to serve as the German Consul. When his wife became pregnant with her fourth child, she went back to Germany to give birth there. Hermann was born on January 12, 1893. Only a few weeks after his birth, his mother returned to Haiti to join her husband, leaving the baby in the care of Countess von Fuerth, a family friend. Hermann did not see his mother again until he was three years old. His first memory was of their encounter upon her return: as she was bending down over him, he hit her in the face with both fists.

From studies such as *Brief Separations* by Heinicke and Westheimer, we know that early separation from the mother is highly detrimental to children and that they react—with good reason—very aggressively when she reappears. Separation awakens feelings of terror and low self-esteem. Young children experience this trauma as a grievous injury to their emerging ego. They locate the cause of their abandonment within themselves. They blame themselves, thinking something must be wrong with them or else their mother would not leave them. Nienstedt and Westermann provide

moving descriptions of this kind of traumatic experience in their book *Plegekinder: Psychologische Beiträge zur Sozialisation von Kindern in Ersatzfamilien* (Foster children: A psychological study of the socialization of children in foster families).

In Africa, Göring's father had become friendly with Ritter Dr. von Epenstein, a wealthy assimilated Jew who had converted to the Christian faith. When Hermann was eight years old, his father retired with a relatively small pension. Von Epenstein purchased Veldenstein castle near Munich, which he offered to let the Görings live in. Frau Göring, who was considerably younger than her husband, was having an affair with von Epenstein; she accepted the offer, and the family moved into the castle. Hermann's father was given a modest bedroom on the ground floor. He was not permitted to enter the rooms upstairs, which were reserved for his wife and her lover. Occasionally, the Görings also visited von Epenstein in his castle in Austria. The wife stayed in the castle with von Epenstein whereas the father was put up in a cottage nearby. It is not surprising that this situation left its mark on little Hermann. The picture Gilbert (the Nuremberg Trial psychologist) presents in *The Psychology of Dictatorship* (pp. 85 ff.) is that of a restless boy, fascinated by military uniforms and warlike exploits, who was ruthless, defiant, and cruel.

Historians seldom recognize the significance of childhood experiences such as these. In *The Face of the Third Reich*, Joachim Fest points out that Göring came from a good family and was thus spared any feelings of inferiority. If "a good family" is taken to imply an atmosphere of emotional warmth, then we are diverted from seeking the causes of Göring's pathological behavior in his childhood. We will not understand that he is compensating for psychic wounds and terrifying experiences by means of grandiose pretensions, which have nothing to do with healthy self-esteem but everything to do with extreme self-doubt.

It is a fact supported by clinical and human experience that children can cope with the intense pain caused by a mother's rejection only by means of withdrawal, self-rejection, or denial. But if they cut themselves off from their pain, they must then seek to locate it outside themselves. This is exactly the situation of Hitler and all the others—including the murderers in Broadmoor, the English psychiatric prison (Gruen, 1997; Cox, 1982)—I have described elsewhere who lack identity. Unable to work through their pain, it plays a central role in their lives because they are driven by the need to displace it onto others. Unfortunately, this means they repeatedly inflict pain on others, in this way taking revenge for having once been victims themselves. Because feeling pain was forbidden in

their upbringing as a sign of weakness and inferiority, its presence therefore had to be denied.

Hermann was split in his identification. On the one hand he identified with the severity and Prussian sternness of his authoritarian father, who had been a cavalry officer under Bismarck and was the descendent of an advisor to Frederick the Great; on the other hand he loved the luxury and medieval splendor of the castles in which his mother's lover permitted him to live, and admired the power and wealth von Epenstein embodied. His father had become a nobody in terms of power (Manvell and Fraenkel, p. 16), and the boy had to deny the pain he felt over his father's humiliating situation as well as his mother's betrayal of him and his father.

Especially pronounced in the results of Göring's Rorschach test, taken by all of the accused in the Nuremberg Trials, was his inability to show any feelings. He lacked all sensitivity in human interactions; he could neither give nor accept warmth and kindness. He looked upon authority as ridiculous, as unreliable and sadistic. After the initial presentation of the cards during the Rorschach test, when he was questioned about his reactions, his answers indicated deep hurt behind his condescending and scornful manner. The authority figures he had initially seen as ridiculous were now transformed into respected physicians. Von Epenstein was a physician. Thus, the test results suggested severe psychic injuries that Göring had experienced but could never acknowledge. They also pointed to the confusing situation of his boyhood that made him feel torn by inner conflict (Miale and Selzer, pp. 96-98).

The Rorschach test revealed not only aggressiveness but also deep depression, which he succeeded in overcoming by resorting to violence. His scorn for danger and his habit of frequently exposing himself to dangerous situations can be interpreted as an inherent suicidal tendency. It is common for people who have been wounded in their most intimate early relationships—that is, with mother and father—to try to escape their pain by seeking out danger and committing acts of violence, in this way suppressing their fear. I had a patient who almost drowned as a child, but he felt no fear at that moment. This attitude characterized Göring's reckless behavior throughout his life and amounted to a lack of respect for life itself.

His fearless behavior was paralleled by the slavish submissiveness with which he tried to placate authority figures like Hitler. In this regard he resembled his father rather than von Epenstein. He once said, "It is not I who live, but the Führer who lives in me" (quoted by Fest, p. 75). And: "Anyone who knows how it is with us knows that we each possess just so much power as the Führer wishes to give. And only with the Führer and

standing behind him is one really powerful, only then does one hold the strong powers of the state in one's hands; but [acting] against his will, or even [merely] without his wish, one would instantly become totally powerless. A word from the Führer and anyone whom he wishes to be rid of falls. His prestige, his authority are boundless" (quoted by Fest, pp. 75-76). These words convey a panic fear of the person in power. Göring said to Hjalmar Schacht, "Every time I face [Hitler], my heart falls into my trousers" (quoted by Fest, p. 75).

This man, whose boastfulness knew no limits, immediately submitted to Hitler's posturing when he heard him speak for the first time in 1922. This is typical for people who base their identity on identification with authoritarian figures. On the one hand, they despise everything human; on the other hand, they surrender to the pose and its aura of power and decisiveness—in Göring's case represented by both his father and his mother's lover. Without this surrender of the self in order to fill the underlying emptiness of an inner self lacking its own identity, such people are unable to exist. Their only alternative is to continually expose themselves to danger of a violent and/or suicidal nature. It is characteristic of people like Göring, who equate power and strength, to accept the posturing of an idealized oppressor as genuine strength, and make it their own in order to feel strong themselves in a delusional way. Thus, Hitler became the center of Göring's life. The result was a voluntary servitude, the continuation of the fantasized reversal of his earlier oppression and at the same time a denial of his injury and pain.

Yet Göring's drug addiction was a sign that he was not able to master his psychic pain. He started taking drugs after he was wounded on the day of Hitler's putsch in November 1923, and by the summer of 1924 he had become a morphine addict. By then he was in Sweden, where he was committed to Lanbro, a mental institution, and put in a ward for violent patients. In 1925, Göring's Swedish physician noted in his report that this was a man of weak character who was prone to boasting in order to conceal his deeply rooted lack of moral courage. "He was regarded by the Swedish doctor as an hysteric, unstable in his personality, sentimental yet callous, a violent man prompted by fear. Like many men capable of great acts of physical courage which verge quite often on desperation, he lacked the finer kind of courage . . ." (Manvell and Fraenkel [1962], p. 62; cf. also Butler and Young). Gilbert writes that it was clear Göring had since childhood exhibited an intense need for physical stimulation and an inability to tolerate punishment and frustration (pp. 94-95).

For the rest of his life he sought refuge in drugs and other means of escaping situations that triggered anxiety. The American prison comman-

dant at Mondorf said of his prisoner: "When Goering came to me . . . he was a simpering slob with two suitcases full of paracodeine pills. I thought he was a drug salesman" (quoted by Gilbert, p. 107).

Even before Hitler committed suicide, Göring's need to identify with the aggressor led him to identify with the Americans who had emerged as the new victors. On Hitler's last birthday his entire entourage gathered in the close quarters of the bunker. Göring was standing at the table across from Hitler. As Albert Speer described the situation: "[Göring,] who always made such a point of his attire, had changed his uniform quite remarkably in the past few days. To our surprise the silver-gray cloth had been replaced by the olive-drab of the American uniform. Along with this his two-inch wide gold-braided epaulets had given way to simple cloth shoulder strips to which his badge of rank, the golden Reich Marshal's eagle, was simply pinned. 'Like an American general,' one of the participants in the conference whispered to me" (p. 562). Clearly, Göring himself was completely unaware of this. Even Hitler seemed not to notice the change.

Göring's Swedish psychiatrist tellingly described him as a person without an inner self—the distinguishing characteristic of all those who have rejected their pain and suffering as something foreign. It seems paradoxical that by inflicting pain on others, one need no longer feel one's own pain; but by means of violence, the perpetrators maintain this dissociation. They must inflict pain constantly in order to escape their own. It was impossible for Göring as a child to bear his own pain caused by his loveless surroundings and his parents' betrayal. In addition, his identification with his oppressors led to a complete reversal so that he idealized the aggressors instead of hating them. Under developmental conditions like these, the hatred of one's self is fully projected onto other victims. Thus the violence and destructiveness of such people.

RUDOLF HESS, HITLER'S "STELLVERTRETER"

(My information on Hess is drawn from G. M. Gilbert, *Nuremberg Diary* and *The Psychology of Dictatorship*; J. R. Rees, *The Case of Rudolf Hess*; F. R. Miale and M. Selzer, *The Nuremberg Mind*; and J. C. Fest, *The Face of the Third Reich*.)

Acting on his own, Rudolf Hess flew to England in 1942 to try in person to persuade the British to let Germany pursue its *Lebensraum* policy in Europe. In return, Germany would guarantee England her empire. Hess was arrested and examined by a team of psychiatrists. Their analysis of his personality development emphasized that he was always seeking father substitutes, men with whom he identified because he wanted to be influenced

by them. While a Gymnasium student in Godesberg it was his history teacher who had filled this role; as a student at the University of Munich it was Karl Haushofer, a professor of geopolitics; and ultimately it was Hitler.

Hess was born in 1896 in Alexandria, Egypt. His father, a wholesale merchant, was very strict, instilling fear in his children. Rudolf, his brother, and his two sisters did not dare to play uninhibitedly unless their father was away. While Hess was in prison in England, he spoke of having stood up to his father only once in his entire childhood. Otherwise he was always a well-behaved boy who obediently followed his father's wishes. He would have liked to study science and mathematics, but his father wanted him to become a businessman.

When the First World War broke out in 1914, he enthusiastically volunteered for military service, happy not to have to pursue a business career. He was wounded twice while serving in the Bavarian Infantry Regiment. Later he was promoted to lieutenant, and in 1918 was transferred to the Air Force. After the war ended, Hess joined an anti-Semitic nationalist group in Munich and took part in political street fights, in one of which he was again wounded.

Hess's first encounter with Hitler in 1920 led to an "almost magical" attachment, as Hess's wife put it. She described his reaction when he returned from a meeting at which Hitler had spoken as ecstatic: "[he] kept on shouting, 'the man, the man;'" and on another occasion she wrote, "He was like a new man, lively, radiant, no longer gloomy, not despondent" (quoted by Fest, p. 190). He had finally realized the part of himself he had excluded because his father would not tolerate it. By identifying with an idealized figure he could reclaim that part as his own and live it out.

What kind of image did Hess have of such a figure? Soon after his first meeting with Hitler he wrote: "Profound knowledge of all matters of state and of history . . . faith in the purity of his own cause and in ultimate victory, and an indomitable will to give him the power to carry away audiences with his speeches and cause the masses to cry out to him in jubilation. . . . The people are yearning for a real leader, free from all party fraud, for a pure leader with inner truthfulness . . . On every occasion the leader demonstrates his courage. This produces blind trust in the organized power; through this he achieves dictatorship. When necessity demands he does not shrink from shedding blood. . . . He has nothing in view but to attain his goal, even if he has to trample on his closest friends in order to reach it. . . . Thus we have the picture of the dictator: . . . mercilessly hard and then again soft in his love of his people . . . with a steel fist in a velvet glove, capable . . . of conquering himself" (quoted by Fest, pp. 190-91).

These lines reflect the terrible truth of an ego without a self of its own, of a human being unable to develop an identity, who consequently searches for someone to whom he can surrender himself unconditionally. By submitting to the idealized father he longs for, the son can disown his real father. What nevertheless remains is the fact that he has been imprinted with a fiction, an ideal the parents fashioned of themselves that has nothing to do with their reality. This voluntary servitude resulting from surrender of the self represents a flight from responsibility for oneself. A person like this is captive to and dominated by the dictates of obedience that have been placed upon him. In a speech given in June 1934, Hess made clear his total surrender to another: "With pride we see that one man remains beyond all criticism, that is the Führer. This is because everyone feels and knows: he is always right, and he will always be right. The National Socialism of all of us is anchored in uncritical loyalty, in the surrender to the Führer that does not ask for the why in individual cases, in the silent execution of his orders. We believe that the Führer is obeying a higher call to fashion German history. There can be no criticism of this belief" (quoted in Fest, p. 189).

This is a man without an inner sense of self, a man always in search of someone powerful with whom to identify in order to fill his own inner emptiness. Such a man does not know what love or empathy is. On the contrary, when he comes upon these feelings, he dismisses them as signs of weakness. We often point out in defense of people like this how good they are to their wife, their children, their secretary; but we don't realize that their behavior is not based on empathy but on playing a role in which they behave "correctly." They can be disarming because they give the appearance of being humane while actually having no regard for others. They do not recognize the destructive life-denying element in themselves that draws them to an idealized image of a superhuman being. They hate the very idea of love, for it was denied them; they want to destroy everything that reminds them of their need for emotional warmth, and the suffering they endured because that need was never satisfied. They look for a figure who "with indomitable will . . . does not shrink from shedding blood," not even their own.

Hitler, the consummate actor in portraying strength and force of will, fulfilled the dreams of every self-destructive torturer, thereby freeing them to find deliverance in the nonbeing they were seeking. Herein lies the tragedy of Hess and the German people as well as the victims of Nazism. In the name of love, life was destroyed.

When adults without an inner self identify with the role-playing of the person they idealize, they are revealing the extent to which they were imprinted by the idealized aggressor in their childhood. This not only ex-

plains Hitler's success in embodying perfectly the male myth that glorifies strength and will power, it also reveals the pathology inherent in this whole process. Once robbed of their real self and committed to this path, these people are unable to get beyond image and role-playing, with the result that the reality of their true feelings is pushed aside.

An example of this is provided by Albert Speer's behavior: on April 22, 1945, during the last stage of the war, he took leave of Hitler in Berlin and went to Hamburg, where he made a recording of a speech in which he called for resistance to Hitler's order to destroy "all military, transportation, communications, industrial, and supply facilities, as well as all resources within the Reich" to prevent the advancing enemy from using them (Speer, p. 523). He nevertheless felt the need to visit Hitler again, knowing full well that he might be arrested and put to death. In *Inside the Third Reich*, Speer wrote that he was drawn to Hitler as to a magnet. Now, at the end, he wanted to bid the Führer a proper farewell, even though it might mean his death. I believe his attitude illustrates the power that identification with the aggressor has on a person with no self of his own.

The inner emptiness I am talking about, which is caused by denial of one's pain and can be filled only by identification with the aggressor, is a terrible reality that is difficult to acknowledge because one is afraid of re-encountering the terror experienced in childhood. If we as a society do not understand that this inner emptiness actually exists, that there are indeed people without an identity, then we will not recognize the dangerous consequences of this phenomenon. It is crucial for us to realize that this kind of distorted development is widespread. The current prevalent fixation on image and role-playing as "the real thing" is a clear indication not only of how many people there are without an identity of their own, but also of the fact that their nonidentity is encouraged by our culture.

This interplay between nonidentity and the accompanying necessity to overvalue and idealize image as reality rescues one from feelings of inadequacy (which are the result of nonidentity) and is what made Hitler possible. Freud recognized this pattern in his book *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, which appeared in 1921. One must keep in mind here that the ego qualities Freud describes are part and parcel of the male myth of strength and will power, and are the same traits of nonidentity that lead to fixation on and imprinting of parental image and role-playing. Referring to the selection of a leader, Freud writes: "He need often possess only the typical qualities of the individuals concerned in a particularly clearly marked and pure form, and need only give an impression of greater force and of more freedom of libido; and in that case the need for a strong chief will often meet him half-way and invest him with a predominance to

which he would otherwise perhaps have no claim." These words still ring true today, and unfortunately this state of affairs is encouraged by our culture with the result that appearance takes the place of real being.

Children become alienated from their inner self when they are forced to identify with adults who do not understand them. Furthermore, if these adults believe what they are doing is for the children's own good, then it is impossible for the latter to become aware of their own plight, and the pain caused by what is being done to them must be denied in order to maintain the crucial bond with the mothering person. That is why as adults we must also deny our pain, for to acknowledge it would mean that we realize we were made victims in childhood. But that is something we must not recognize because it would expose those we idealized, who inflicted the pain. This is the starting point for destructiveness and violent behavior: those who do not feel their own pain must inflict it on others. We punish others who are like us, our brothers and sisters, because of their pain, which is really our own and which, having transferred it to others, we continue to deny—this time, however, by despising our victims for *their* pain.

Destructive behavior gives people without identity the feeling of being alive. A Nazi skinhead in Germany, who not long ago cruelly trampled an innocent man to death, said during a psychiatric examination: "Anger, frustration, pain, sorrow—they don't get through to me. Just push them away, that's the best thing, or else transform them into icy hatred" (Eggers). The hatred felt for the victim within underlies the compulsion that drives people to kill, to put an end to life itself out of revenge for not having been loved.

To summarize: Without becoming conscious of one's pain, a person cannot become a real human being, but can at best resemble an efficient machine that imitates a human being. Already in the eighteenth century the English poet Edward Young commented on the extent of the pathology of nonidentity when he wrote that we are born as originals but die as copies. Those who lack an identity of their own do not have the strength to endure their psychic pain. They avoid it by attacking and attempting to destroy others. That is what Göring was doing to his mother when he struck her in the face with his fists. He was using violence as the way to deny and rid himself of the pain he had experienced when she abandoned him. Göring's whole life was an expression of his contempt for the pseudo-love that had so wounded him. Psychopaths like Göring and Hess cannot tolerate their pain and keep it at a distance by means of violence. They barter their real identity for identification with and idealization of the aggressor.

For those who surrender the self, in the end it is only destructiveness and even killing that fill them with a feeling of aliveness.

Translated by Hildegard and Hunter Hannum. This article is based on *Der Fremde In Uns (The Stranger within us)* by Arno Gruen, published by Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart, May 2000.

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